The Dreaming

Aborigines have the longest continuous cultural history of any group of people on Earth. Estimates date this history between 50,000 and 65,000 years. Before European settlement of Australia, there were around 600 different Aboriginal nations. The Dreaming for Australian Indigenous people (sometimes referred to as the Dreamtime or Dreamtimes) is when the Ancestral Beings moved across the land and created life and significant geographic features. The Dreaming also means to 'see and understand the law'. Dreaming stories pass on important knowledge, cultural values and belief systems to later generations. Through song, dance, painting and storytelling which express the dreaming stories, Aborigines have maintained a link with the Dreaming from ancient times to today, creating a rich cultural heritage. 1

The relationships between land, animals and people

In most stories of the Dreaming, the Ancestral Spirits came to the earth in human form and as they moved through the land, they created the animals, plants, rocks and other forms of the land that we know today. They also created the relationships between groups and individuals to the land, the animals and other people. Once the ancestor spirits had created the world, they changed into trees, the stars, rocks, watering holes or other objects. These are the sacred places of Aboriginal culture and have special properties. Because the ancestors did not disappear at the end of the Dreaming, but remained in these sacred sites, the Dreaming is never-ending, linking the past and the present, the people and the land.

Creation stories

An example of a Dreaming story is that of the fertility mother of the [Gagudju](http://mypage.direct.ca/k/kenbinns/index.html)12 people of Northern Australia:

*Life started when a creator woman called Warramurrungundjui came out of the sea and gave birth to the first people and gave them the languages. She carried with her a digging stick and a dilly bag holding yams, waterlilies and other important plants. She planted the food and created waterholes with her digging stick on the ground. Other creator beings appeared...After completing her creative act, Warramurrungundj turned herself into a rock.*

The Rainbow Serpent

The serpent as a Creation Being is perhaps the oldest continuing religious belief in the world, dating back several thousands of years. The [Rainbow Serpent](http://www.nlc.org.au/html/abt_rainbow.html)13 features in the Dreaming stories of many mainland Aboriginal nations and is always associated with watercourses, such as billabongs, rivers, creeks and lagoons. The Rainbow Serpent is the protector of the land, its people, and the source of all life. However, the Rainbow Serpent can also be a destructive force if it is not properly respected.

The most common version of the Rainbow Serpent story tells that… *In the Dreaming, the world was flat, bare and cold. The Rainbow Serpent slept under the ground with all the animal tribes in her belly waiting to be born. When it was time, she pushed up, calling to the animals to come from their sleep. She threw the land out, making mountains and hills and spilled water over the land, making rivers and lakes. She made the sun, the fire and all the colours.*

Another version… *The Rainbow Serpent was a major creator being. It forced passages through rocks and created more waterholes. Today it brings the wet season each year, which causes all forms of life to multiply, and appearing in the sky as a rainbow. But it is also to be feared as he can punish anyone who has broken a law by drowning them in floods. The Rainbow Serpent still lives in a pool under a waterfall in* [*Kakadu*](http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/kakadu-national-park)*15.*

And another… *The Rainbow Serpent slept under the ground until she awoke in the Dreaming and pushed her way to the surface. She then travelled the land, sleeping when she tired, and left behind her winding tracks and the imprint of her sleeping body. When she had travelled the earth, she returned and called to the frogs to come out, but they were very slow because their bellies were full of water. The Rainbow Serpent tickled their stomachs and when the frogs laughed, the water flowed out of their mouths and filled the tracks and hollows left by the Rainbow Serpent, creating the rivers and lakes. This woke all of the animals and plants, who then followed the Rainbow Serpent across the land.*

Stories of the stars and sky

Seas and stars

*19A man is standing in a canoe. In his left hand, he holds a fishing spear, representing the* [*Southern Cross*](http://www.nnsw.com.au/constellations/southerncross.htm)*20. In his right hand, he holds a sorbi (a red fruit). He and his crew of 12 are preparing for a journey but before the journey begins, the crew consume all the food and drink what they planned to take. So the the man strung the crew together in two groups of six and cast them into the sea, where their images became star patterns in the sky. These patterns can be seen in the star constellations today. 2122*

A Dreaming story tells how the pointer stars (part of the Southern Cross) came to be… *Two young brothers had been hunting and decided to make a campfire when a strong wind blew up. Soon the entire mountain was on fire and the brothers ran to the top of the peak to escape the flames, but the fire caught up to them. Just as they started to burn, the ancestor beings took pity on them and gave them the gift of flight. They flew high up into the night sky, where their camp fires can still be seen today.*

Lightning Brothers in the sky

*The Lightning Brothers travelled from the Warlpiri lands of the Northern Territory, stopping at Yirindale Springs before coming to camp at their site known as Yiwalalay. During their travels, the younger brother began lusting for his older brother’s wife, which ended in a fight between the two brothers. In the Dreamtime story, the older brother is claimed to have decapitated the other with a swing from his special stone axe. The Lightning Brothers live in the sky-world, the dwelling place of many ancestral spirits. The brothers are depicted in* [*rock art*](http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-indigenous-art)*26 and* [*paintings*](http://www.archeologicalart.com/Web2/Galleries/The%20Aboriginal%20Art/LightningBros/FMLightningBros.htm)*27.*

Stars and family relationships

People's relationships to one another are based on the constellations of the Southern Cross. The stars represent a man and a woman ideally suited in marriage, with their parents, children and other relations all marked out in the night sky. The ancestors broke the Milky Way into individual stars that we see today. Some fragments fell to earth, creating sacred places. This story is re-told in paintings, song and dance as well as re-enacted in contemporary initiation ceremonies, where men wear white down on their bodies to represent the stars. Thus, connections are made on a daily basis between ancestors, people, stars and land. The telling of the Dreaming stories reinforces knowledge about the constellations, social behaviour, land formations and sacred places.

**Now it’s your turn…**

**WRITING FOLIO TASK**

Your task is to write your own Dreamtime Story.

You may write one extended piece OR four short pieces.

Your story must stay true to the Dreamtime themes.

You must draft your work! This includes carefully proof reading and editing your work!

You will have class time to prepare and write your piece.

**DUE DATE: FIRST LESSON BACK OF TERM 3**